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DESIGN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.—SCHOOL OF DÜRER.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

WOOD-ENGRAVING.

W. J. LINTON. *Some Practical Hints on Wood-Engraving, for the Instruction of Reviewers and the Public.* Boston: Lee and Shepard. New York: Chas. T. Dillingham. 1879. Sq. 12mo. 92 pp. Illustrated.

A PORTFOLIO OF PROOF IMPRESSIONS selected from *Scribner's Monthly* and *St. Nicholas*. Scribner & Co., New York. (No date. Copyright date, 1879.) Sq. folio. 102 plates, with table of contents and title.

BILDER-ALBUM zur neueren Geschichte des Holzschnitts in Deutschland. Herausgegeben vom ALBERTVEREIN. Mit Text von HERM. LÜCKE. Leipzig: E. A. Seemann. 1877. 4to. xiv. pp. and 118 plates.

THE wood-engraving controversy, which, after having raged violently for some time, seemed to have lulled, has broken out again. Mr. Linton throws down his gauntlet, calling those whom he conceives to be his adversaries by name, and it is not to be supposed that his valiant foemen will be slow in accepting the challenge. It is a pity that Mr. Linton's valuable and timely *Hints* should be burdened with so much personal matter, and those who esteem him most highly will be most grieved thereat. That he has had ample provocation, there is no room to doubt. The list of epithets applied to him, as given on p. 4 of the *Hints*, is sufficient to disturb the equanimity of the mildest of men. That so undoubted a master of his art—the exhibition of wood-engravings held some time ago at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts showed him to be "easily first" among his many able brethren—should feel it necessary to preach wrathfully, like the prophet of old, against what to his clear vision is an aberration, if not a decadence, may likewise be understood. Nevertheless, one cannot help thinking that a little less wrath would have been better.

But aside from these considerations, Mr. Linton's treatise will be welcome to all those who take a real interest

in wood-engraving. It is seldom that an artist writes so clearly upon his art, and it is a fact not to be denied, that the teaching which comes from those who have merely a literary knowledge of the subject is not always trustworthy. Without a tolerably good insight into the technicalities of the reproductive arts, their productions cannot be fully understood, and a very great deal of the pleasure and instruction to be derived from them is lost. Yet it is true that this knowledge is most frequently found wanting, even in persons who have followed the subject for years with a certain amount of intelligent interest. Wood-cuts are continually mistaken for etchings or engravings, or the reverse, the various kinds of engraving on metal are confounded with one another, and this confusion has been considerably "worse confounded" since the introduction of the many "processes" now in vogue. That the "reviewers," upon whom Mr. Linton "comes down" with such force, have done a good deal to perpetuate this state of things, is equally undeniable. If they were content with the expression of a simple opinion, things might be well enough. But they speak *ex cathedra* with the full weight of undoubted authority, and the good public is all the more awed by their sayings, because, being nameless, they are enveloped in the mysteries of "the great unknown." The *Nation*, for instance, some time ago gave the lie direct to the publishers of a well-known book by saying that the "typographic etchings" with which said book claims to be illustrated are not etchings at all, but simply coarse wood-cuts, while a little more of—say careful examination, would have shown the reviewer that even coarse wood-cuts would have avoided some of the qualities of these illustrations. The *Times*, again, in a review of a work lately issued, allows one of its writers to say that the illustrations seem to be printed from electrotypes. How stunned the public must be by this evidence of wonderful discrimination on the part of the critic! How broad the smile on the face of those who know a very little of the

true inwardness of book-making! A great deal of this positive, but unwarranted assurance would be done away with if every man or woman had to sign his or her name to every word written and printed. Mr. Linton is perfectly justified in his condemnation of anonymous reviewing. Even if it does not encourage "bushwhacking," it certainly is a fruitful source of recklessness, and a reckless teacher is by no means desirable.

To those who take up Mr. Linton's little book "in a respectful and modest spirit," (to borrow an excellent phrase from Prof. Norton's Preface to the catalogue of Mr. Ruskin's drawings,) the chapters on "Fac-simile," "White-Line," "Mechanism and Art," and "Photography on Wood," will be full of instruction, even if the reader should occasionally find it impossible, in spite of all willingness, to agree with the author. If, for instance, facsimile is to be taken in the strict sense of the word, as required on p. 27, it is difficult to see how there can be four different kinds of it, as explained on p. 40. Nor is it clear how "absolutely exact mechanical rendering" can differ from "equally exact but artistic rendering." If one thing is *absolutely exact* and another *equally exact*, there can be no difference between the two. A little reflection, however, makes it clear that the difficulty arises out of the use of an infelicitous expression. By *exact mechanical rendering*, Mr. Linton evidently understands the cutting of line for line in its place, but without regard to the individuality of the designer, as expressed in the character of each line. An *exact artistic rendering*, on the contrary, implies the cutting of each line, not only in its place, but with its character faithfully preserved. In the vindication of the artistic qualities of the white line, Mr. Linton seems to go somewhat too far, and if he adduces Nesbit's cut on p. 69 of his book as an example of *all white-line work*, except the mere outlines (see p. 49 of *Hints*), he will perhaps find but few believers. One would say, on the contrary, that it is a most striking example of the combination of white line and black line which has been called "impossible" by one of the reviewers whom Mr. Linton criticises. In protesting against the classing of Dürer's and Holbein's work as "outlines" (p. 16), Mr. Linton is most certainly correct. But it is curious that he should have allowed himself to be betrayed into speaking of the *Apocalypse* of Dürer as outlines, as these cuts differ in no respect from his other works.

In connection with Mr. Linton's *Hints*, the publication of the *Proofs from Scribner's and St. Nicholas* is most opportune. Scribner's publications have made a place for themselves in the history of wood-engraving, whatever may be thought of the character of some of the cuts in them, and this set of carefully printed proofs from a number of the best of these cuts will be treasured in every collection which aspires to historical completeness. It would have been better, however, if the title of the collection had been more strictly adhered to. It is called a *Portfolio*, while it has been made into a gilt-edged parlor book. Each cut, no matter how small, is printed by itself, surrounded by a gray tint. If the cuts had been printed on a tint, they would have looked better. The most satisfactory arrangement would have been to print them on tinted paper, and mount them on white sheets. The collector might then have arranged them, either according to engravers or designers. But this is a difficulty easily overcome with the aid of a pair of scissors and the necessary quantity of

mounting-board. Many of the cuts which the wood-engraving controversy has made famous are to be found in the collection, although the most famous of all, the "undeveloped" *Emerson*, has been omitted. But there are three other heads drawn by Wyatt-Eaton and engraved by Cole,—the *Lincoln*, the *Holmes*, and the *Bryant*. Will it be denied that they bear out Mr. Linton's strictures? Leaving aside all more artistic considerations, is it possible to tell what material was used in drawing the original of the *Lincoln*? If all knowledge of Mr. Eaton's work should be lost, and nothing should survive but this cut, future historians of art will certainly make him out to have been a worker in floss-silk. Nor can it be said with truth that the two other heads produce the effect of crayon, or that the *Birth-place of John Howard Payne*, engraved by F. S. King, after F. Hopkinson Smith, looks very much like charcoal. It is impossible to produce these effects on wood. The best imitation of a crayon drawing ever executed on wood, far beyond anything of the kind thus far done by the disciples of the new school, was made twenty-eight years ago, by E. Kretzschmar, of Leipsic. It is from an anatomical drawing by Stephen of Calcar, and was published in Choulant's *Geschichte der anatomischen Abbildung*, Leipsic, 1852. But even this does not really convey the effect of the original drawing; it looks rather like a lithograph, and has often been mistaken for one by experienced lithographers, as well as by equally experienced wood-engravers. In others of the cuts the much vaunted facility in rendering texture is also most conspicuous by its absence. Look, for instance, at No. 55, engraved by Mr. Cole from Mr. F. B. Mayer's *Bringing in the Boar's Head*. There is the same woolly or silky texture throughout, and the copper kettle seems to be made of very much the same stuff as the cook's pantaloons. It is curious to note how the new departure in wood-engraving, which was to lift the engraver far above the plane occupied by the "mechanical" fac-similist, threatens to end in a much worse kind of fac-simile than ever was thought of before. Instead of the intelligent line drawn by the draughtsman, the engraver now imitates the (often accidental and unmeaning!) brush-marks, the shadows thrown by ridges of paint under a light in which the picture was perhaps never intended to be seen, and for his coloristic effect he depends upon the false values of the photograph. A most glaring illustration of the destructive effect of the photograph is furnished by No. 35, *Seeking Pasture*, engraved by H. Wolf after John Bolles. Surely the white frame-work of which the sheep seem to be constructed could not have looked so in the original, and the lines in the sky—more like waves than clouds—probably also owe their undue prominence to the photograph. And is not the corrugated-iron countenance of the Father of his Country (No. 2) likewise a freak of the camera? How different from these things, which are interesting as experiments only, Cole's *Modjeska* (No. 27), the landscapes (Nos. 10 and 77) by King after R. Swain Gifford, and No. 64 after Thomas Moran, Kruell's *Dauphin* (No. 90), Linton's *Grand Canyon* (No. 98) after Thomas Moran, Henry Marsh's beautiful bits of color, *Etruscan Fan* (No. 18), and *Still-Life* (No. 50) after Miss Cook, and a number of others! There are no unmeaning patches, no obtrusive lines, no false values, in these. The engraver has entered upon his task in the artist's spirit, and, although he never thought of *imitating* a painting, he has yet produced a more painter-like effect

than can ever be reached by "aping the tricks of other arts."

The *Bilder-Album* (Picture Album illustrative of the modern history of wood-engraving in Germany), having been published as far back as 1877, may be thought out of place here. But it is of special interest in its bearing upon the question in hand, and a few words concerning it may not, therefore, be considered amiss. In its outward appearance it is not nearly as ambitious as the *Portfolio*, nor are the cuts as well printed. But it contains specimens from the year 1837 down to that of publication, and is rich in what the other lacks,—true fac-simile work, while the white line is comparatively ignored in it. This tendency is characteristic of German wood-engraving, and, coming fresh from Mr. Linton's *Hints*, it is curious to read some of the utterances of Mr. Herm. Lücke in the introduction with which he has provided the *Album*. He maintains that Bewick's method "very decidedly led wood-engraving in the wrong direction," and that "a picturesque effect, such as the English wood-cut endeavored to obtain by false means" may be reached, by the aid of modern appliances, "in a manner which is thoroughly artistic and commensurate with the nature of the wood-cut. . . . English wood-engravers . . . met with only passing success [i. e. in Germany]. German wood-engraving, on the contrary, followed a line of development which is distinctly and consciously opposed to the English method; it adhered to the line, as opposed to tint-cutting, and this is the basis of its peculiarity and strength, and of its artistic value. . . . The modern picturesque wood-cut is remarkable not only for its delicacy, elegance, and precision of treatment, but more especially for its subtlety of tone, which it obtains by an artistically free management of the line. The mechanical tinting process, so called, is seldom found in truly artistic work, and then only subordinately, and in judicious combination with the line. The gradation in tints, the contrasts between them, and their harmonious relations, everything in fact which goes to make up the charm of picturesque treatment, is expressed by the best modern wood-engravers simply by means of artistically managed lines, frequently giving to their works a similarity to etchings even more striking than that to be noticed in some of the early attempts made in the Netherlands. Facsimile engraving more especially shows the degree of development reached by the line manner, properly so called. In fac-simile work it is the task of the engraver to avoid all manner of translation, including that which, even when the line is used, is frequently employed in the treatment of large masses of shadow, and to follow the lines of the designer into the minutest expression of individuality. This is a task which calls into play the finest artistic sensibilities of the reproductive artist, whenever the original to be reproduced is of importance." Perhaps—to use a mode of expression which is altogether too prevalent in high-toned criticism—these views may be "ignorant," or "vulgar," or "impertinent." The convincing force of the argument expressed in these words, the close, logical reasoning displayed, the searching analysis, would at once make it evident to the public that the reviewer towers colossally above him whom he crushes, more especially as Mr. Lücke is probably entirely unknown in America. But let it suffice to say, in somewhat milder language, that the author very decidedly undervalues, and even seems to misapprehend, the uses of the white line. For the rest, the *Album* contains very good

specimens of true fac-simile. Of this kind are most of the cuts after Richter, almost forgotten already, yet beautiful in their simplicity of idea and method; the cut by Hecht after Seitz (No. 104), vigorous and bold, like the work of the sixteenth century, etc. The last plate, portrait of Dürer, by Bader (No. 118), is a superb specimen of the kind of "perfect mechanism" which Mr. Linton alludes to on p. 36, but of which he could not recall an example. The so-called fac-simile of a pencil-drawing on Plate 117 will perhaps pass muster even with the ultras of the "new" school.

S. R. KOEHLER.



ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE HISTORY OF ART.

Illustrations of the History of Art: a series of above 2,000 wood-cuts selected from the Works of Kugler, Lübke, Burckhardt, Overbeck, Dohme, C. von Lützow, Falke, Wolmann, Lacroix, etc. Chronologically arranged, and forming a Universal Atlas, to be used in Connection with any Work on the History of Art. Authorized American Edition, published under the Supervision of S. R. KOEHLER. In five Parts. Parts I. and II. Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts among the Nations of Antiquity and of the Early Christian, Romanesque, and Gothic Periods. Boston: L. Prang & Co. 1879.

The World's Worship in Stone: Temple, Cathedral, and Mosque. 150 Engravings from the best Artists, with Descriptive Text by M. M. RIPLEY. Boston: Estes and Lauriat. 1880.



T was a happy idea of E. A. Seeman, the well-known publisher of works on art at Leipsic, to supplement the public museums and other existing means of popular education in art in Germany, by collecting from various works, published during the last quarter of a century, the illustrative wood-cuts, disconnecting them from the text to which they belong, but so classifying and arranging them according to schools, nationalities, and eras as to present to the eye, by the testimony of a multitude of comparative examples, the story of the gradual development of art in its various branches. Many of these illustrations were buried in works inaccessible to all but special students. This enterprise, emulating the monumental labors of Lübke, D'Agincourt, and Durant, necessarily inferior to them in elegance and system, but surpassing them in range of example, has its principal *raison d'être* in its very cheap and practical form of presentation. The five parts have each from forty to sixty crowded plates, and are afforded at from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per part. We are indebted to Messrs. L. Prang & Co. for publishing an American edition of this treasure-house of pictures under the competent supervision of Mr. S. R. Koehler. The two volumes which have already appeared relate mainly to the sculpture and architecture of the early nations, and present in fair sequence and suggestive parallel the history of these arts up to the period of the Renaissance. The other volumes, which are promised speedily, bring the story down to modern times and include also the development of the industrial arts from the Middle Ages to the present day, and the history of painting from the time of the Egyptians to the opening of this century.